What I have for you here is a tome of short stories. These are some of my favorites and I hope that you enjoy them. Word of caution, sometimes I tend to have a very dark view of the world and the things in it. I still hope that you find these stories entertaining. If so and there is enough response maybe there will be part II.

This first story is about a man who has a very long-term stalker with the most horrid of intentions. He stands out as a man who has lost everything and intends to satisfy his need for revenge. He stands out as One Real Man…

One Real Man

Chapter One

Judd Conner had always been a real man. His father had taught him to be hard but fair. He had given him his love of family and faith in God. Judd had been raised by his father as his mother had died early on in Judd's life. He had an older brother and sister, but they had long since moved on with their lives. He missed his father every day.

The world had changed since those close family times. The collapse of the monetary system had changed the course of man and Judd was riding the flow like everyone else. He was returning from a foraging trip for food and the all too precious water that was required to sustain life. A half a day's walk from here his family waited upon his return. As he made his way quietly through the woods his thoughts jumped around from his father to the faces of his children and wife. The large rattan staff at his side helped keep his walking pace and provided protection when needed. He loved rattan, which was easy to care for. Flexible when needed and he had made one other small addition to his staff. He had made two large brass ferrules' to cap each end of the staff. It had taken him a while to get used to it but talk about striking power!

He had one more ridge to climb, about 1500 feet up and down the other side was home. He noticed a small black curl of smoke just above the ridge. He had told his wife before about burning green wood or anything other than deadwood in the winter. It makes too much smoke. As he crested the ridge and looked down into his little valley what he saw stunned him. He stood for several minutes looking around, his eyes did not blink. His breath did not draw nor did his heartbeat. As he reached the split rail fence that marked his

yard he realized he did not know how he got there. The house was gone, charred and ash laden heaps of black lay where the house used to be.

The staff fell away from his hand as he sank to his knees. As his knees touched the ground an exasperated scream emitted from his throat as the snot and spittle flew forth from his mouth and nose. The tears that ran down his face felt as if they were burning his cheeks as his face hit the dirty snow in front of what was left of the house.

He screamed and cried and banged on the ground until red surrounded his fist. As he lay there he almost felt as if life were draining away from him, and in a way it was. He pulled himself up from the prone position to his knees and looked to the sky. He prayed for what a man should never prey for. He prayed for a good moment or even a second but what he prayed for more than anything else was revenge.

He grasped his staff and stood and walked towards the smoking pile of rubble. He looked at what was left and saw no reason to disturb this now. He walked around the house and found several sets of tracks leading in and out of the clearing. It appeared to be three people. From the foot prints he assumed they were all men. He looked back over his shoulder and as he turned away his resolve now steeled, and his heart consumed with hatred as he walked away.

He headed out to collect several small stores of supplies in the area. The trail of his prey was fresh and had to be followed as soon as possible. He made it to his first cache. He had stashed this one in the side of a hill in a small dry cave. It contained the only firearm he owned. It had been given to him as a child by his father. He had treasured the old bolt action Remington Model 511 Scoremaster in 22 LR. It was safely wrapped and protected, and he had about 300 rounds of ammo for it. His set of hunting knives as well as an old Bear and Sons Damascus Bowie were here. He checked the skinner and filet knives as well as the Bowie to make sure they all had a good edge. A small cleaning kit for the rifle and stones for the knives were added to his pack. He hung the rifle on his shoulder after he had slung the pack and headed down the trail to the next small cache. It would only take half a day to clean out all of the stores in all the caches. Then he would be on his way.

Chapter Two

Judd had been on their trail for three days now. He had followed them around in a circle and back down the mountain headed toward the flatland. As he rounded a corner on the trail he stopped. The hair on his arms and the back of his neck stood up and he got that funny feeling in the pit of his stomach. He backed just off the trail behind a rock where he crouched and waited.

Thank the heavens the wind was in his face. Around the corner came a small brown bear. His nose to the air the 300-pound bear would grow to be a large grizzly someday. The bear stopped in its tracks and lifted its nose again to the wind. He pawed the ground and mulled around the area for a few minutes. He had looked in Judd's direction several times, but Judd felt certain he had not been seen. The bear stood a moment and dropped and took off up a slight grade and disappeared into the tree line. Judd sat down with his back against the rock and had his lunch there. He was going to give the youngster plenty of time to clear the area. After all, this was his territory and not Judd's.

As he sat and ate his mind drifted to the thoughts of his wife and two children. How he missed them. He could at least clearly see their faces and hear their voices in his mind. He smiled and cried all at the same time. He had a small cloth in his shirt pocket that his wife had stitched all their names on, and they had all slept with it as well. Judd always carried this with him on his foraging trips as a sweet reminder of home. He had done likewise with a small piece of material that was left with the family. No doubt his piece of cloth was all but dust in the wind. He pulled the small swatch of cloth from his pocket and held it to his nose. He still smelled that soft wonderful smell of Rachael his wife and the child like smells from Tommy and Anna as well. He knew that all too soon he would no longer have this small indulgence of peace and security and that his enemy would have taken all that he had. He sniffed the cloth one more time and stuck it back into his pocket.

Lunch and his small reverie done, he slowly started back down the trail keeping a watchful eye for the bear as he made headway. He had walked about another mile or so down the trail when he caught the small piece of mono filament line with his ankle in midstride. He did not see it in time but did hear the large tree limb headed in his direction. He almost made it out of the way but just as he hit the ground a large spike embedded in the limb caught the back of his pack. When the spike entered the pack it did not do much damage other than the hole it ripped in the pack. What it did do was slide Judd across the ground with its forward momentum and across a small rock. When the limb had completed its arch and had reached the end of its rotation it recoiled and pulled its way out of Judd's pack but not before it drug him across the rock again.

Standing to take a look at what damage had been done he noticed a small blood spot had started to grow on his shirt. Just as he was about to open his shirt to look at the wound a shrill laugh rolled down the side of the ridge across from him. It made his blood run cold and a shiver ran down his spine. The evil laugh told him two things. He was on the right track and must have

been pissing his enemy off and that as he had believed before. Not all of them were men.

Chapter Three

Judd ducked behind cover and skirted the area slowly and quietly. He knew the direction the laugh came from and would pursue that shortly. When he got to what he thought was a safe area he stopped and dressed the wound on his stomach. Not too bad, a good cleaning about six stitches and a bandage. He decided to make camp. Due to blood loss he needed to think about his situation for a while. Would he be able to bring justice to a woman? Could he kill her? Too many questions. A small dinner and some medicine and he sacked out for the night. The next morning, he got up and ate and worked the stiffness out of his joints and cleaned and bandaged the wound again. As he broke camp he started seeing things that made him grow cold. Someone had been in his camp last night. A small someone, the girl with the laugh he suspected. He carefully noted the prints and locked them in his memory. You can run hell spawn, but you cannot, nor will you ever hide. I will bring you justice.

Judd tracked his prey for several more weeks. He had avoided several traps and snares as well as a couple of false trails that had been set up for him. As he tracked his prey and evil grew within him. At times it seemed to almost burgeon in him to the point of exploding his physical body. Contempt was his companion; he was a harbinger of death and prayed often to complete his task. Since he had left his house and family he had not prayed once for salvation nor comfort as he expected none.

Judd stumbled along the trail. He was still on their trail but was almost out of food and the long days and nights of tracking and looking over his shoulder was taking its toll. He needed a real meal and to resupply his pack as well as a good night’s rest on something other than a rock. This part of what used to be Colorado had not been known for its soft ground and easy travel but was a place to make or break a hard man much less a tenderfoot. Judd had reached his limit when he fell over a ridge line and saw a small town below in the valley. He pulled the cloth from his pocket and stuck it to his nose and drew what little smell it contained and used it to carry him down the ridge and into the unknown little village.

Chapter Four

Judd trudged past an old sign that said Lake City Colorado. As he painfully worked his way down the main street he came to what must have been a

Lodge at one time. Above the lintel of the large doors hung a sign that said "O'Hagan's".

As he started towards the doors a large man at the door stopped him. "Rack your rifle in the foyer; you can keep your knives. We got good food and cold beer. You got money?" Judd just shook his head. "My name is Amos son. I am the Sheriff in this small village. You gotta a name?" Judd looked back at the man and smiled as he fell to the porch.

When he woke up he was warm and laying on an old couch. It sure was better than the dirt and rocks he had slept on for the last several weeks. The old man Amos was sitting next to him in a rocking chair drinking a beer. "Dang son thought we had lost you there for a while. You ain't nothing but skin and bones. How long you been out there?" Judd shook his head and sat up on the edge of the couch. "Far longer than I should have been. Amos is it?"

"Yeah that's me, now let's go and get you something to eat and drink. We can talk about getting you some supplies after that." Judd stood and followed Amos out of the small room off the great room in the center of the lodge. He was seated at a table and an older woman came over to tell him what was available to eat. After that conversation was out of the way he sat sipping on a tall glass of water as he looked around the room.

From his table he noted that there was not a great number of people in the room, maybe ten or twelve. The place felt comfortable and easy going. He was turned around in his chair when he heard the thunk of a bowl hit his table. He turned around to see the old woman walking away. There was a large bowl of Elk stew with a large chuck of homemade bread slathered with butter and a tall ice-cold glass of beer. He grabbed the spoon and got busy with the best meal he may have ever had. When he was done and sitting there drinking the last of the beer he stood and walked around the room to admire all of the hunting trophies hanging there. He liked looking at all of the other oddball stuff hanging on the wall for decoration.

He sat at the bar and drank another beer and enjoyed another fresh piece of hot bread and talked to a few of the locals. Amos came over and they negotiated a deal for all of the supplies he would need for a while. He waited on the supplies to be brought and set up with the Inn keeper for a room for the night and a hot bath. He would wash his clothes in the old bath water and hang them to dry while he slept. He was comfortable and content for the first time in several weeks.

Chapter Five

Judd was walking around the room again as he waited on his supplies. He wandered towards a small room off to the left of the bar. He saw only a couple of tables in this area and as he started to turn and walk away he heard a noise. It came from the right on the wall next to the bar where he could not see. As he walked around the corner he froze in horror. He stood and he looked, mouth hanging open, tears from his eyes. Rachael sat in the corner of the room behind the table looking at him. As he stood there the woman spoke. “Cat got your tongue Judd, miss your children Judd**. “WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT YOU MORON?”** Judd noticed the movement behind him in the main lodge. “You were supposed to go out with me that night instead of Rachael; I would have trained you right.”

Judd slowly walked up to the table and sat down. As he did he used his knee to push the table into the corner pinning the woman in the chair. “Who are you?” Judd exclaimed. ‘My name is Catharine; I am Rachael’s sister.”

“Was” Judd said? “Was what?” Catharine said as she cocked her head. Judd looked at her as a large smile came across his face. “You were her sister, you killed her. SHE IS DEAD, so no longer your sister nor my wife.”

Catharine laughed long and hard. The same eerie laugh he had heard on the ridge that afternoon. “I looked for you and Rachael for years after the collapse. I wanted what was mine. I am sorry about the children, but you should have had my babies not hers. When I finally found her you were not there, and I figured that this would be the ultimate justice. If I can’t have you then neither can she.” Judd looked towards the sky and whispered to himself “Please forgive me God.”

Judd stood and drew the Bowie from the chest rig he wore it in and leaned across the table. He grabbed a handful of Catharine’s hair and pulled her forward as he placed the blade to her throat. She looked at him and grinned. “Do it you miserable piece of..." Judd slammed her face into the table hard. He stood and as he did he used the back of the knife to break the oil lamp in the sconce above her head. The oil poured down over her as she started to come to. He took the knife and struck what was left of the glass and the burning wick fell down onto her chest and she blazed up. As he slowly backed away from the table as the pitch of her scream stared to change and climb higher. He kicked the table over. The small bucket candle that had been sitting there flipped around in the air dumping its contents and increasing the blaze and heat of the fire. She no longer moved or made noise.

The next thing Judd knew he was being dragged out the front door and was pinned to the porch by four very large men. He was held there for a while until the fire was out. Amos walked up looking grim and squatted down next to Judd. “Let him go boys.” Judd sat up leaning against a post and took a deep breath. “Son, you better have a good reason for killing that woman. She had been arrested for theft; we do not have a jail, and we were keeping her here till the Judge comes through. Easier to feed and clean her. She was tied to the wall behind the chair she sat in and had no way to defend herself or get away from the fire.” Judd looked at Amos and smiled. “Amos let’s go back inside. I have quite a story to tell you.”

Epilogue:

Judd finished hanging the door in the new cabin. He looked out across the clearing and smiled at the large flower garden that was in bloom where the old cabin used to be. He wondered to himself if he would ever figure women out or for that fact human nature in general. He worked hard and prayed for guidance and talked to his father a lot…

The End

Do you believe in Santa Claus? In my heart of hearts, I do. A spirit like his is something we need. Not to worship but as an example of what good people do. So, do you have the Christmas Spirit?

The Christmas Spirit

He sat at his desk. His palms face down being drawn around in circles. The half-smile on his face indicated his disapproval of the current situation.

As he swirled his hands around on the smooth cypress of the desk top he remembered making this desk. He had centuries ago cut the ancient trees, then the planks. The planks were then racked about thirty feet down in a clear water lake for several decades. The planks were so hard when he worked them for the completion of the desk that he had labored many weeks in their construct.

A soft rap at his door brought him back to the here and now. His wife pushed the door open and walked up to the desk and sat a strong cup of coffee down with cream and sugar and a small tray of snacks on the side. “Kris, you have to eat. Stop worrying so much. I know you will work this out.” He looked at her and smiled in a way that he knew only she would understand. She smiled

back and scratched his back as he leaned forward in his chair. She leaned back against the desk as he leaned back in his chair. “I know I will figure this out. I just never thought it would come to this. Never.”

As he drank the coffee he pondered the world as it was. He smiled as if he knew the Mayans were wrong as it was past the 21st and they were still here. He knew that there was only one who knew the end date anyway. He stood and donned his jacket and work cap and headed through the door that his wife had left through. He walked down a long hall to his workshop. As he walked through the grand Archway he was immediately fell upon by several of his staff. They were all asking questions at once and seemed to all be doing several tasks at once as well. He stopped, held up his large hand for silence. He answered all the questions in one long breath and then walked up the small set of steps into his office. He pressed a button on the desk and several people on the very busy shop floor headed for the office without hesitation.

When everyone was in and seated he asked for the door to be closed. He looked around the desk at the faces there and smiled. “How’s it going with the long-term storage food?” The leader of the crew at the desk spoke up. “We have it down to a science now. I think we can hope for as along a storage time as the commercially available stuff. Except ours is better.”

“How is it better?” Kris asked. “Well, it taste better, will not bind you up when eaten for a long period. I am also glad to report that it has a better balance of vitamins and minerals in it. Kris smiled, “Have we made the transition on the toy line to the camping and survival gear?”

“Yes Kris, we have also increased the amount of reindeer required to pull the sleigh as well. We knew the size of the gift list would increase once everything fell apart down below.”

“Great thinking gentlemen.” As he laughed aloud and his belly shook. “I knew this was going to be a tough year and I want to thank you all for your help and support in making this happen. Make sure all of your people get the same.” With that everyone got up and back to what had to be done. Kris walked back down the hall to his quarters to get ready for a long nights work.

He spent some time with his wife snuggling and building his spirit for the work ahead. After he put on his suit for the ride and as he sat by the fireplace pulling up his boots. His wife came and leaned over and wrapped her arms around his neck. She whispered in his ear “Only one other has

given this world the love you have. You need to remember this and abide in its strength. I love you and hurry home you big pain in the neck.” He relaxed in the warmth of the hug and chuckled softly as she kissed his cheek and stood up.

Kris now walked down a long breezeway of tall granite arches towards the sleigh that awaited him. He was torn. On one side he was happy to still be making this yearly trip. On the other, he was deeply saddened by the reasons the trip had to be made. Now and well into the future people all over the world will depend on him for food, warmth and hope and the belief that someone still cared for them. He thought this may be the greatest gift he delivered of all.

He stepped up into the sleigh and grabbed the reins and turned to survey his world. He was glad to be a part of this wonderful human experience and all that it entailed. He sat in the seat and snapped the reins sharply and the 30 pair of reindeer pulled hard and brought the sleigh to a fast pace and then up off the ground. As he pulled back hard on the reins and brought the sleigh up to a good altitude he took a moment to look around. He smiled to himself and looked to the heavens and said a little prayer for the night ahead.

He turned the sleigh south to start his normal route and as he gained speed his heart fluttered just a little in anticipation of all the joy and happiness this trip would bring. His Christmas wish this year was for everyone to believe in themselves and prepare for what may come. His smile turned to a look of determination as he sailed away into the night…

I still believe

The End

This next story is about a gentleman that is reaping what he sowed a long time ago. Did this happen? Probably not, but as he goes into The Last Sunset It is something interesting to think about…

The Last Sunset

Jacob walked out of his cabin on the side of the mountain and down the front steps. He looked out to the west and the sky had not changed, and he still heard and felt the low rumble in the earth beneath his feet. He knew it was time for all of this to end. He had been into town yesterday and many people

who were friends and others who were not were gone. He assumed that the Rapture had happened. His exceedingly large Rottweiler Charlie came bounding around the corner of the cabin back from his nightly foraging. He stepped up and nuzzled his snout against Jacob's leg. "Hey buddy, how are you this morning? Any luck last night?" Charlie almost seemed to smile at him in recognition and answer to his question.

Jacob took a sip from the coffee mug his was holding and sat down on a bench in his gazebo. Charlie lay at his feet as he stared out at the strange looking sky. As they sat Jacob noticed movement back by the cabin. He heard the steps on the hard rocky ground and saw a man walking towards him. Charlie came to the all too familiar alert posture and bound down off the gazebo towards the man. Jacob stood to protect the stranger and froze mid stance. Charlie was running around the stranger as if he were a long-lost friend. Jacob froze not because of Charlie's actions but because of an overpowering understanding of recognition. The tall slim man with long dark hair stopped at the foot of the steps to the gazebo and smiled up at Jacob.

"Jesus." He gasps as he sat back down. "Yes Jacob, it is me. May I join you?" "Yes, yes please come and sit. Why are you here?" Jesus scratched Charlie on the head. "Magnificent animals aren't they Jacob." Jesus looked up and into Jacob's eyes. "The real question is why you are here Jacob?" Jacob looked back at Jesus and frowned. " Do you remember Jacob? Do you remember why you are here?" Jacob moved around on the bench in a manner to show his uneasiness with the situation. "The last time I saw you Pilate had just given me over to you and your friends. I still bare the scars from your flagrum."

"After our little walk from the courtyard to the Praetorian when all your friends were there and you wove my crown from the Hasselquist and placed it on my brow." Tears ran down from the corners of Jacobs's eyes as he tried to look away. "You struck me in the face and cursed me as I fell to the ground. It was this single act that has kept you here for all these decades." Jacob sniffed and looked Jesus in the eyes. "I have begged for your grace since that day. I had no faith then and work at keeping grace now. Still, I am here."

"Yet you stood at my feet as I hung in disgrace and drank and cursed and spat upon me." Jacob shook with the recognition of eons of understanding and fear. "I am here Jacob to offer you the chance to free yourself. The chance to save and free others. There are millions of unsaved souls here."

Jacob looked at Jesus. “How can I redeem myself for such a horrible act? What could one man do?” Jesus stood and looked out over the mountains. “Time is short Jacob. You asked me what one man can do. I was but one man, look around. What did I do?" There was a long uncomfortable silence before Charlie laid his head in Jacob’s lap. Jacob rubbed Charlie’s head and sighed.

“Jacob, you must give of yourself as I did. Without reservation and without pride. The battle within you between Grace and Pride needs to end. You must decide and act.” With that Jesus walked down the steps of the gazebo and turned to face Jacob. “Jesus, please tell me what it is I must do because I fear I may take the wrong path again.” Jesus reached out and took Jacob’s hands in his and smiled. Jacob felt a passion and peace he had never known. “You know what you must do. You must release yourself to faith.” Jesus let Jacob’s hands go. “God will bless you with forgiveness Jacob. You just have to do what you know in your heart is right.” Jesus turned and walked away.

Jacob walked back to the bench with his hands still clasped together as if Jesus were still holding them. He felt a pain rise in his hands and surge through his body. Not the type of pain you would feel from an injury, but the pain felt by millions of people all at once. He was overwhelmed with sadness and despair. He knew who else had felt this pain. As his eyes cleared, and he sat up he opened his hands. Inside was a twig of Hasselquist baring three large thorns. He looked out to see no one around as he had expected. He looked back down at his hands and the twig, a smile of relief and understanding crossed his face. He looked at Charlie and clenched his fist tightly. As he saw the rivulets of blood pour from his clenched fist he felt peace. He looked out across the sky as the earth fell away under his feet.

He knew he had done the right thing…

The End

This next story is about life through the eyes of a dog. I hope that you enjoy it…

The Eyes Have It

Bosco was an all-American mutt. Ninety-five pounds of bounding, jumping joy and happiness. The only thing unique about him was the fact that he has one green eye and one blue. He really caught your attention when you saw him.

He was built like a brick but could be as gentle as a lamb. When he wanted to be.

His thick brown fur was well kept. He liked it that way. He had sat in front of the fire with his little boy for many nights tending and grooming his coat. The little boy was the love of his life and although he liked the big man in charge. The little boy was his, he was in charge.

The big man being the leader of his pack had taught him many things. He loved doing things for the big man as they always brought praise and tender loving words. He would die for this man, his little boy; all of these people. They were his pack. You had to have a pack to survive out here. He had been in many fights with the wild dogs in the area and had come to be known as a dog not to be messed with by these mutts. They all knew he was in charge and since he had grown up they avoided his territory.

Something bad was happening. He had been outside watching his little boy when the ground began to shake. There was a huge gust of wind and a light so bright in the sky that he laid down on the little boy in an effort to cover him. When he stood the little boy got up and Bosco started pushing him towards the inside as fast as he could. The big man ran over and grabbed the small boy and yelled at Bosco “Inside”.

Once inside the rest of the pack was going crazy. Grabbing things and running into the opening by the food bowl down inside of the big dark place. The lights came on when he went down. Still running and crying and grabbing. Bosco did not understand. Crying usually means bad things. He could not think of anything he did wrong and grabbed the little boy’s blankie and ran down with it. He would help he thought. No one said anything so he continued to grab things and go down with them.

Soon, there was no more running and grabbing and crying and the big man yelled for him to come. He bounced down into the now well-lit area and the big man pushed him through the opening and closed it shut with a loud thump. All was quite except for the big female in the pack. She just kept whimpering over and over. Every time Bosco tried to get close to comfort her she just pushed him away. He went over to his little boy lying on the floor and curled up by him to keep him safe.

The big man called him over and made that funny sound that Bosco took for happiness and the whole pack started doing it. Making that noise and showing their teeth. The big man looked back at the pack and pointed at the pile of stuff Bosco had brought down. The blankie, a phone book and a now leaking two-liter bottle of Coke. The big man grabbed Bosco’s head and gave

him that familiar scratch and rub he loved so much. The whole pack was now rubbing and scratching Bosco and boy did he love it.

They stayed in this place for a long time. Bosco was unsure of how long. No day or night seemed to be showing itself. He liked all the extra attention and treat's he was getting. He did not like having to go do his business on the paper they provided. He felt like he was doing something wrong, but the big man let him know that it was OK.

Soon enough the big man had gone up and out and was gone for a long time. The pack slept in the big dark room again. When they got up everyone went up. Bosco was taken outside by the big man and walked around his territory. Bosco knew this was as far as he would go for now. He also knew that nothing had better try and come into this area either. They would have Bosco to deal with.

As he was walking his rounds he was startled when a small brown dog ran across his area. Bosco jumped and ran towards the small dog. In mid stride he saw why the dog was running. A very large dog was close behind snapping and barking. He jumped and just before the big dog got the little one Bosco had his jaws around the back of the big dog's neck. They rolled together and just before they stopped Bosco bit down as hard as he could. He heard a crunching sound like when he chewed bones after supper. The big dog did not move. Bosco got up and walked over to the little dog. His neck hair was standing straight up, and he growled low and hard.

The small brown dog lie there shaking, crying and bleeding. He walked over and sniffed the little dog. A girl, small and scared. Her ear was torn, and she had several bad bites. The big man walked over and looked at the dead dog and shook his head. "I sure am glad you like me Bosco." He just rubbed against the big man's legs. He did not understand except that he thought that what he had done was a good thing. No yelling or getting smacked. So, it must be good. The big man picked up the little brown dog and walked inside. She was up on the table in the kitchen, something he was never allowed to do. The big female was looking over the little dog and was making very low soothing sounds. She was cleaning the little dog and feeding her too. Hey, what about me! I did something good. How about a treat!

The big man seeing Bosco walked over to his favorite place. The treat jar and grabbed Bosco a big juicy chewy piece of beef jerky. Bosco grabbed the meat and sat by the table while the little dog was looked after. When the big female was done she sat the little dog down on the floor. She cowered down when Bosco came over. He sniffed her a couple of times. The big man walked

over and picked the little dog up and nuzzled her close. Bosco knew then that she had just become part of the pack.

Time passed and things changed. Bosco was happy because no one ever left now. They all stayed home all the time. He loved it. The big man and everyone are out digging in the dirt. Bosco was a little frustrated with this. Whenever he dug holes in the grass he got into trouble. Oh well, just keep an eye on things. Bosco knew he would never figure out how these animals think. He did not even understand them most of the time. He knew he was a part of their pack and that was all that mattered.

Bosco walked over and laid down in the shade of a big tree. He watched as they all worked. The little man was what he watched most. The little man and little girl dog were playing in the dirt. Boom, Bosco's ears were ringing as he jumped up and spun to see where the noise came from. The rest of his pack were all using those long sticks that made a big noise and pointing them at the edge of the grass. He ran towards the little man and as he drew close something hit him in his rear leg and knocked him down. He yelped really loudly and got back up, he looked back at his rear leg and he was bleeding.

He made his way over to the little man and kept him down. The big man yelled at Bosco. "Bosco, Inside." Bosco grabbed the little man's shirt and ran. The little dog followed. The noise stopped a while later and everyone came inside. Bosco was lying on the floor with the little man and the girl dog. He felt very sleepy, and his leg hurt. He felt the big man pick him up and put him on the table in the kitchen. When he woke up he was still on the table. He felt very sleepy, but his leg did not hurt as much. There was this thing on his leg. He could not move it very well. Everyone was there and they all rubbed Bosco very gently. This made him feel very good.

The big female leaned down and spoke softly in Bosco's ear. "You saved my little boy." He had no idea what this meant but knew that the way the big female had done it. He was being praised, and he felt safe, warm and loved. If you could ever see a dog smile, it would have been then.

It took a long time for Bosco to walk again but walk again he did. He spent a lot of time with the little man and the little girl dog. He had much to teach her about his pack. After all, if he was expected to do things then she would be too. Both his little man and little girl dog grew. Bosco had slowed down some but was still in charge of these two. He taught the little girl how to hunt, guard and protect the rest of the pack. She had learned well and was now as big as Bosco. She challenged him from time to time for the lead. But Bosco was still top dog.

Many years passed and Bosco now had a little dog of his own. He trained him every day. His little man now had a baby of his own and Bosco watched over everything. He stayed by the inside more than ever if he were needed and looked after his pack the best he could. He lay in the sun and slept while his little man played, and his mate nuzzled and cleaned his coat. Even though his legs were slow and his muzzle grey, Bosco was one happy puppy…

The End

I struggled with posting this next story. I was asked by some writer friends years ago to write a very short and very dark piece, I said what the heck. This next story is not only very short, but it is as dark as you will ever read. I take no responsibility for any of the actions of the characters in this drama play. So, please don't judge me harshly. Life is after all. Life. As they say, "See no evil, Hear no evil, Speak no evil…"

See No Evil

Samantha, Sam. That's what most people call me. I had just turned 16 years old when the world as we knew it ended.

We lived in a brownstone my father owned downtown when things started to fall apart. It had been about a month when all of the financial systems here in the US shut down or just ceased to exist.

Things had not been too bad when everything first started. It was almost like a camping trip we took home. No lights, but the water continued to work for a while. It was still nice to go to the bathroom, better than the hole in the backyard my father dug. That was yucky…

Now even cleaning up a bit was a chore. Water to heat and clean rags to find, boy do I miss the washer and dryer. Until this all started I had never worn a set of clothes more than one day. That is not the case now.

In time things got worse. More gunfire was heard in the streets as well as screaming and crying in all hours of the night. My dad has done an awesome job at keeping us safe so far. I am not sure, but I think he has shot a couple of guys. He works very hard at keeping us from seeing all the evil in the world.

Two nights ago things started to get worse. Very bad I might say. My dad

says that a group of bad people had started about twelve blocks down the street, and they were invading the homes on both sides of the street and that they were killing and raping everyone inside and taking everything of value. They were moving our way.

Dad had worked very hard to get us out of the area, but all of his plans had fallen through. Last night the group was four blocks down the street and my dad did something I had never seen him do. He sat on the edge of his bed and cried. Me and Mom had tried very hard to ease his worry but were not able to offer much in the way of help. I have never seen him so upset.

Things are very bad. I know my Dad has shot several people this morning even though he won't talk about it. I now sit in the closet in the front hall with the door closed. I hear all kinds of noise and gunfire. I hear my Mom scream like I have never heard before and sit on a bucket here in the closet with my hands over my eyes. I am not sure what good it does, but it makes me feel better. I hear my father's footsteps outside the door as he opens the closet door just a slight bit. I see my Dad leaning into the small opening. He looks at me as the tears roll down his face. As I stand to comfort him he shakes his head no.

He looks at me as he speaks, "I love you Sam, I love you with all my heart and soul baby. Put your hands over your eyes. Everything is going to be Ok baby."

As the two men burst through the front door they hear a gunshot come from the closet the man is leaning into. He turns to face them as the tears flow from his eyes and as the gun comes up in his hand. They blow him to pieces as his house is torn apart.

The two men walk over to the closet he had just closed and opened it to discover its hidden treasure. Both stood in shocked astonishment as they looked at the little girl with the fresh gunshot wound to her forehead. They looked at each other and closed the door.

The older of the two men looked back at the crew working the house and told them that the closet was off limits.

The carnage continued and Sam would never see her 17th birthday.

The End

Thank You for reading the stories. I hope that you enjoyed them. ~ Victor